



Virtual Fellows Program Innovative Diplomacy in Action



"Not all the arts of diplomacy are learned solely in its practice. There are other exercise yards."
~~~ Dean Acheson 51<sup>st</sup> U.S. Secretary of State

Secretary of State John Kerry has stated that we live in a “vastly more complicated world where changes come at us faster than ever before...” This “requires more nimble institutions and a more agile foreign policy...” at a time when no one has “all the answers.”

Therefore, the U.S. Department of State has established the **Virtual Fellows Program** (VFP) in order to expand its access to the knowledge and experience of the American public. Building on the success of the State Department’s current on-site fellows programs and our sister program, the Virtual Student Foreign Service (VSFS), the innovative VFP encompasses the range of issues that go into the formulation and execution of U.S. foreign policy. It does so by tapping our Fellows’ knowledge and experience, while providing qualified U.S. citizens with the opportunity to serve our country and help address the complex challenges we face in the 21st century.

**The Program:** The Virtual Fellows Program operates in a manner similar to the highly successful Department of State Virtual Student Foreign Service program, but on a more senior level. The VFP gives seasoned U.S. citizen professionals the opportunity to contribute by serving as virtual consultants on issues, problems or questions faced by the State Department, without requiring that Virtual Fellows physically relocate to Washington, D.C.

The VFP staff considers expressions of interest from such qualified U.S. citizens and seeks to match them to specific tasks and projects developed by bureaus, offices, and overseas posts of the State Department. For the purposes of this program, “qualified” refers to persons who can provide valuable and pertinent advice drawn from a high degree of administrative, professional, or technical knowledge and experience. A Virtual Fellow will ideally have a minimum of five years of professional experience that is directly applicable to the assigned task.

The resumes of and expressions of interest from U.S. citizen applicants whose knowledge or experience might contribute to the goals and objectives of a bureau will be shared with the

potential host bureau for consideration. Selected Virtual Fellows shall be assigned to specific, defined projects or be tasked to consult on particular issues, problems, or questions. Fellows will not be used to perform managerial or supervisory work, to do work performed by the Department of State's regular employees, or to fill in during staff shortages.

Fellows will serve virtually on a part-time basis as unpaid consultants. The minimum duration of the Virtual Fellowship will be six months, with extensions possible, if agreed to by both the Fellow and the State Department. Before starting their service, accepted candidates will require a suitability determination or security clearance (to be provided by the Department of State) at the level determined by the host bureau. A candidate is not required to have a Public Trust determination prior to applying for this program.

All Fellows must understand and agree to comply with federal ethics regulations during and following the fellowship. In addition, as appropriate, the State Department may require that some candidates receive a more extensive ethics clearance prior to commencing their service.

To be clear, Virtual Fellows will not be reimbursed for their service. Candidates should note also that service as a Virtual Fellow is not designed to lead to permanent federal employment, does not convey preference in seeking such employment, and does not convey the ability to convert non-competitively to a competitive service federal position.

**Additional information** about the Virtual Fellows Program can be found at [www.state.gov/vfp](http://www.state.gov/vfp). Want to submit a proposal? Want to apply to be a Fellow? Or, do you just want more information? If so, please contact us at:

- Email Collective, VFP@state.gov
- Gillian Milovanovic, Senior Advisor for eDiplomacy, 202-634-3617;
- Annette Rubiano, Advisor for eDiplomacy, 202-634-3609.

Currently available projects can be seen at <http://www.state.gov/m/irm/vfp/rls/221402.htm>.

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